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261331Z Aug 04

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001434

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. NEULING
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVELLE, D. TEITELBAUM
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
PARIS FOR C. NEARY
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/24/2009

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: BISHOPS STILL TRYING TO FACILITATE DIALOGUE

REF: LILONGWE 823

Classified By: Political Officer Win Dayton under Section 1.5 b/d

Summary

[11.](#) (C) Two of the three Mutare Bishops, Sebastian Bakare (Anglican Church) and Trevor Manhanga (Evangelical Fellowship) updated the Ambassador August 24 on their efforts to mediate a resolution of Zimbabwe's crisis. Bakare said Tanzanian President Mkapa had assured them that he would remain engaged on Zimbabwe, including as part of the recently established Southern African Development Council (SADC) troika (with Mauritius and Botswana). The bishops said they had also requested appointments with Presidents Mugabe (in advance of their proposed U.S. trip), Mbeki, and possibly Malawian President Mutharika. End Summary

Regional Heat on Mugabe

[12.](#) (C) Bakare and Manhanga reported that along with their Catholic counterpart, Bishop Mutume, they had met with Tanzanian President Mkapa in Dar es Salaam before the SADC summit in Mauritius last week. Mkapa had told them that while in Mauritius he would press President Mugabe on a resolution of Zimbabwe's political conflict. The SADC had designated a committee comprising Tanzania, Mauritius, and Botswana (the immediate past, present, and future chairs) to address Zimbabwean election issues. Though not on the committee, South Africa would of course continue to exert influence. According to the Bishops, Mkapa had said Mugabe was feeling regional heat and would feel more in Mauritius. They added that reminders that others "were watching" were useful and noted in that regard the impact of criticism by traditional sympathizer Namibia at the regional conference of election commissions in Victoria Falls in July. The bishops said they expected to get detailed readouts on Mkapa's and Mbeki's meetings with Mugabe in Mauritius from the Tanzanian and South African embassies shortly, but understood that he had been largely isolated at the conference.

[13.](#) (C) In a follow-up telephone exchange with Poloff August 25, Manhanga said the Tanzanian and South African embassies still had not received detailed readouts on their respective leaders' meetings with Mugabe in Mauritius. The Tanzanian Ambassador had, however, reported that he understood the exchange generally to have been "fruitful" and asserted that progress had been made. Manhanga added that the Bishops would reactivate their channel to former Malawian President Muluzi with a view to arranging a meeting with visiting President Mutharika (ref A) and to inquire about possible UN activity on Zimbabwe. Muluzi had told the bishops in an earlier meeting that he had discussed Zimbabwe with Kofi Annan, who had broached the possibility of Muluzi acting in some UN capacity to stimulate progress on Zimbabwe.

Implementation of Mauritius Principles Doubtful

[14.](#) (C) Bakare and Manhanga said Party Secretary of Information Nathan Shamuyarira, one of their ZANU-PF interlocutors, had advised them to meet President Mugabe before they traveled to the United States next month. Manhanga said they had accepted his offer to arrange such a meeting but that as yet no appointment had been confirmed. They intended to stress to Mugabe the importance of prompt implementation of the Mauritius principles. Bakare said dissatisfaction was growing within the ZANU-PF over the party's lack of direction and over uncertainties about the succession. Manhanga said the succession issue had the potential to split the party. That said, both agreed that no one within the Party would be willing to challenge Mugabe's authority and that for now ZANU-PF's strategy would continue

to be intimidation of the opposition, along with an attempt to mute international and regional criticism with cosmetic, and last-minute, changes to the electoral process. He expressed concern that many in the international community might be willing to accept such cosmetic reforms and suggested the U.S. consider a statement stressing the importance of adherence to the Mauritius principles.

Election Delay and MDC Boycotts Possible

15. (C) Manhanga said he had met recently with opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai, and that all three bishops intended to meet with him again before traveling to the United States.

They said the opposition was considering not contesting any parliamentary by-elections until electoral imbalances were sufficiently addressed. (Comment: This is unlikely to have an impact on the MDC's effective blocking minority on any constitutional amendments in the parliament. There are currently two empty seats and ZANU-PF needs four more to reach the 2/3 parliamentary majority required to effect constitutional amendments. End comment.) Manhanga predicted that even without heated debate (an unlikely prospect) simply implementing already planned changes, not to mention the Mauritius principles, could delay the elections for some time. He added that this would not necessarily be a bad thing and could allow time to lay a foundation to they support an exit strategy for Mugabe, including possibly combined presidential and parliamentary elections.

Comment

16. (C) We are encouraged by interest shown among some in the region in engaging Mugabe privately, if not publicly. Still, Mkapa's private indications to the bishops sharply contrasted with his public rhetoric in Mauritius, which fortified Mugabe's stature at home by projecting solidarity against "neo-colonial interests." The inconsistency reflects the difficult political line walked by African leaders regarding Zimbabwe. Moreover, we expect Mugabe will continue to lash out publicly against African leaders who dare to take issue with him. The increasingly shrill anti-western propaganda from the state media reinforces our view that the GOZ intends its electoral reforms to be nothing more than superficial cover for a SADC endorsement of next year's parliamentary elections.
Schultz